

The Quarry Industry Legacy

BETHESDA - At the height of the quarrying industry, the population of Bethesda was over 10,000. Today it is currently around 4,327 people (2001 census). The town is known locally as Pesda. The layout of the town reflects the historic land-owning patterns with housing packed onto the hillside in irregular rows. This was due to the A5 marking the border between Lord Penrhyn's land, and the freehold land. This historic legacy can still be seen in the high street, where all the public houses are found on one side of the road. The town was named after the Bethesda Chapel, which was recently converted into residential flats. 77% of the residents are

Welsh-speaking according to the 2001 Census, and the town even today has a higher than average Welsh speaking majority than elsewhere in Wales.

Bethesda has a strong music scene with iconic bands both



©Image courtesy of Oriol Tegfryn Gallery and Lesley Prendergast

'Bigil' - oil painting by Peter Prendergast

Welsh and English having emerged from the town. Gruff Rhys of Welsh band *Super Furry Animals*, one of the most exciting and innovative groups to have ever emerged in Wales, was educated at Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen in Bethesda. The Welsh music scene's leading rock band of the 1980s, Maffia Mr Hughes, emerged from the town, a long time creative hub of the Welsh rock scene.

The landscape of Bethesda has been the inspiration for numerous other artists. Peter Prendergast, an internationally known artist taught at the secondary school and produced numerous paintings of the slate quarry. Cefyn Burgess,

the internationally renowned textile designer and weaver, was born in Bethesda and has produced iconic tapestries of Welsh chapels and textiles based on designs taken from Penrhyn castle. Novelist Caradog Pritchard, author of the iconic Welsh novel *'One Last Night of the Moon'*, was born in Bethesda.



©Image courtesy of Oriol Tegfryn Gallery and Lesley Prendergast

A drawing of Penrhyn quarry, in charcoal and chalk, by Peter Prendergast

THE SLATE TRAIL

Follow 'The Slate Trail' along Lôn Las Ogwen, where you can find a series of information boards recounting the unique story of Ogwen slate, Penrhyn Quarry and the people involved in its production.